



THE BOARD REPORT



2003-2004: Issue 1

September-October 2003

The following is a summary of the September 10 and October 1, 2003, meetings of the State Board of Education.

COMMISSIONER'S BACK-TO-SCHOOL MESSAGE

Connecticut's Public Schools: Working with Families for the Early Success of Each Student

Commissioner Sergi summarized his 2003-2004 Back-to-School Message, *Connecticut's Public Schools: Working with Families for the Early Success of Each Student*. This being his last back-to-school message as Commissioner of Education, Commissioner Sergi reflected on the themes of his messages from the past 10 years. He noted that the theme of 'greater expectations' is threaded through each message, and added, "Raising our expectations for students, teachers, schools, government and communities and acting on those expectations is the key to progress." He noted that there are two issues that require additional attention from all of us in education and our elected leaders: (1) early school success, including access to quality preschool; and (2) the role of parents and families as a child's first and most influential teacher. Commissioner Sergi's message was sent to school districts across the state and is posted on the Department's website (www.state.ct.us/sde). The Commissioner reflected on his experiences in public education during the past 27 years, and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Connecticut's Commissioner of Education.

Oath of Office: Yi-Mei Truxes and Daniel Martinez

Newly appointed student State Board of Education members Yi-Mei Truxes and Daniel Martinez were administered the *Oath of Office of Public Official*. Yi-Mei, a senior at Westbrook High School, and Daniel, a senior at Bassick High School Business Magnet in Bridgeport, were appointed by Governor Rowland to serve on the Board for the period July 2003 through June 2004.

State Board of Education Chairman Craig Toensing noted, "This is the sixth year the Connecticut State Board of Education has had student members, and we welcome their continued input during the coming year."

Appointment of Acting Commissioner of Education

The Board voted unanimously to appoint Mark A. Stapleton Acting Commissioner of Education, effective September 19, 2003. Mr. Stapleton has served as Chief of the Department's Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs Office since 1980, and has worked closely with both state and federal legislators. Mr. Stapleton is co-chair of the state's International Education Advisory Committee and is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Connecticut. He will serve as the Acting Commissioner as the Board conducts its search for a successor to Theodore Sergi.

PANEL PRESENTATION ON ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL: Danbury, Vernon and Milford

The State Board of Education received the draft report "Closing the Achievement Gap: Preschool for All Children in Connecticut." The report focuses on the importance of removing barriers to a high-quality preschool experience for all Connecticut children by 2012. The report does not provide a cost analysis of the recommendations set forth, but notes that "the fiscal implications can be adjusted to policy discussions and accommodations can be made to reflect the practical reality of available funding." Describing how a preschool experience will assist in closing the achievement gap, the report proposes four recommendations to achieve this goal:

- encourage the existing kindergarten through Grade 12 school system to include voluntary prekindergarten programs for children starting at age 3, for a minimum of 2 ½ hours per day for at least 180 school days per year;
- assist low-income families so that every child has an equal opportunity to attend preschool and has access to support services for children and families that need them;
- provide adequate state funding for quality preschool programs and related activities; and
- develop and maintain an early childhood education career development system that will increase the number of individuals with an early childhood teacher certification and provide for differentiated staffing consistent with program accreditation requirements.

Attending the October meeting to highlight state and local partnerships in developing high-quality preschool education services in their towns were Mayor Mark Boughton of Danbury, Mayor Diane Wheelock of Vernon and Mayor James Richetelli, Jr., of Milford. The panelists included in their remarks what they view as important policy considerations.

Vernon Mayor Diane Wheelock told the Board that she has been interested in early childhood education since long before becoming Mayor of Vernon. Mayor Wheelock, who holds a degree in early childhood education, has operated a day-care center for 23 years and serves on the Board of Directors of the Potter's House, a nursery and kindergarten day-care provider. Free lunch is the norm in Vernon, Mayor Wheelock stated. Seventy-five percent of children can afford preschool. It is the 25 percent of students who cannot afford preschool that we must focus on, she added. Preschool and day-care should be considered together to enhance access to the educational component of early care and to provide much-needed support to families. A comprehensive approach also includes ensuring that children receive proper nutrition, which has a direct impact on their ability to learn. Mayor Wheelock emphasized that we cannot place an additional requirement on local boards of education without providing adequate funding. Further, funds for preschool should be channeled directly to those children whose families could not otherwise afford a preschool experience.

Milford Mayor James Richetelli discussed the Kids Count initiative, a consortium of 19 preschools in Milford and the Milford Family Resource Center supported by the public school system. The Kids Count Program provides funds and scholarships to financially needy students. Prekindergarten programs housed in the public schools are very successful in preparing students for kindergarten and in providing early intervention services. The benefits of providing early educational and intervention services, Mayor Richetelli asserted, justify the costs of providing such services and have a long-term cost-savings effect. He described Milford's all-day kindergarten program and the "space issues" affiliated with housing preschool students in the public schools. Mayor Richetelli praised the cooperative and collaborative approach to early childhood education in Milford, particularly the support provided by Milford's business community. Additional state support, he added, would be of great assistance.

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, formerly a social studies teacher and member of the General Assembly, described funding as the "real challenge" to enhancing access to preschool. Mayor Boughton, citing the loss of \$2 million in state aid, said that the city could not handle any more mandates. He suggested that the Board lobby the legislature for more support for towns and request that certain dollars be earmarked specifically for preschool education. Another option that should be considered, Mayor Boughton continued, is tapping into sales tax revenues. Space restrictions prevent Danbury from providing full-day kindergarten to its students, although the city does a "good job" of providing school readiness opportunities. All slots are filled and there is a continuous waiting list. A recent development in Danbury that has a direct impact on the need for additional preschool opportunities is the influx of families from Brazil and Ecuador, many of whom are undocumented and arrive without skills. Children of these families would benefit greatly from receiving preschool services. Mayor Boughton suggested that the board consider increasing school construction reimbursement for projects that include preschool classrooms.

Discussion ensued regarding the benefits of coordination among public and private providers of preschool to ensure consistency in the program and educational services provided to youngsters. Collaborative efforts such as School Readiness Councils, Youth Service Bureaus and other forms of public/private partnerships facilitate the quality of services provided. Panelists also discussed with the Board the benefits of providing municipalities with increased flexibility in terms of space for preschool programs.

S.A.T. RESULTS

The Board reviewed the 2003 SAT results, which were released in late August. Connecticut's 2003 high school graduates recorded the highest combined average SAT scores in 29 years. A record 32,771 Connecticut high school graduates took the SAT, an increase of approximately 1,400 students over last year. Connecticut's combined average score rose 8 points to 1026, equal to the national average. It should be noted that the average national participation rate is approximately 5 in 10 graduates, compared with more than 8 in 10 Connecticut graduates taking the test. Commissioner Sergi noted that the mathematics score increased by five points, and verbal scores increased by three points. He added, however, that we must continue to address the participation and achievement gaps that exist among groups identified by family income, parents' education, race and gender. To view detailed information about the 2003 SAT results, click on www.state.ct.us/sde.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND – ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

The Board reviewed the Department's report on those schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2001-02 toward the goal of 100 percent of students scoring at proficient levels in reading and mathematics by the 2013-14 school year, as required by the new federal law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A total of 149 Connecticut schools in 34 school districts were identified as not making AYP. Commissioner Sergi noted that this is an opportunity for change and improvement. Of the 149 schools, 110 (74%) have been receiving Title I funds. Of the 149 schools identified, 42 were identified because the overall school did not meet the achievement and/or participation standard in mathematics and reading; 48 were identified because the overall school did not meet the achievement and/or participation standard in mathematics or reading; 51 were identified because at least one subgroup did not meet the achievement and/or participation standard in mathematics or reading; and 8 were identified because the school did not meet participation standards only. The identification is based on September 2002 CMT scores attributed to the school the student attended the previous year. These schools join the eight Connecticut high schools identified in July 2003 as not making AYP. For further information, please call Associate Commissioner Abigail L. Hughes, 860-713-6800.

PRELIMINARY LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

The Board reviewed several draft legislative proposals for the 2004 Session of the General Assembly. Under consideration are proposals that would:

- require that local boards of education make placements in private schools, agencies and institutions providing special education only if the school, agency or institution is approved by the Commissioner of Education;
- protect school officials from defamation suits based on job references given for current or former employees;
- consolidate Regional Vocational-Technical School System reporting requirements to the General Assembly and change from annual to biennial reporting;
- raise the enrollment cap for charter schools that are other than kindergarten through Grade 8 from 250 to 300 students;
- change the qualifications of school readiness program staff members by providing that on and after July 1, 2004, certain staff members have an associate's or four-year degree in any subject area, with 9 credits or more in early childhood education or child development and, after July 1, 2005, must have 12 credits or more in those subject areas; and provide that those individuals who are qualified staff members with a credential issued by an organization approved by the Commissioner of Education must have, on and after July 1, 2005, 12 or more credits in early childhood education or child development;
- amend the school readiness statute to allow the Department of Education to use all unexpended funds to provide supplemental grants to eligible towns or to enhance professional development opportunities for preschool educators in school readiness programs;
- provide that the calculation for the funds for program administration of a school readiness program be made at the beginning of the fiscal year, rather than at the end of the year to improve fiscal planning by towns;
- provide that eligibility for school readiness competitive grants be determined on an annual basis, based on priority school designations each year;
- clarify services that family resources must provide and those that they may provide; and give centers flexibility in providing additional services. This will enhance collaboration between the schools and the centers and prevent duplication of services;
- repeal obsolete school construction statutes;
- permit, rather than require, the Commissioner of Education to provide information on procedures for school building committees, building methods and school construction materials and provide advisory services to local officials and agencies on long-range school plant planning and educational specifications, and review sketches and preliminary plans and outline specifications. This proposal was submitted in light of the current and projected staffing level in the school facilities unit;
- include certified indoor air quality emergency projects as projects eligible for local plan review;
- allow an additional 10 charter schools to receive state funds for school construction; and

- grant certain authority to the Commissioner of Education to intervene in matters of controversy involving a local board of education that, in his or her opinion, may put at risk the quality of education in that school district. The actions of the Commissioner, in exercising such authority, would generally precede the Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-4b process, but could also be used in matters that might not be an educational interest of the state, but still affect the education of students.

The proposals will be presented to the Board for adoption at its November 5, 2003, meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT ON SPECIAL EDUCATION 2002-2003

The Board discussed a report containing information about special education services in Connecticut's public schools in 2002-2003. Highlights of the report include:

- The Connecticut special education prevalence rate has been on the decline since its peak of 13.9 percent in 1995-96. As of December 1, 2002, 12.2 percent of the 564,872 Connecticut public school children enrolled in Grades K-12 were receiving special education and related services.
- Preschool children with disabilities represent six percent of the general population of 3- to 5-year-olds in the state, and approximately 10 percent of the total special education population served.
- The mean amount of time students with disabilities spend with their nondisabled peers has remained steady for 6 years, at approximately 68 percent. The median time with nondisabled peers for 2002-2003 was 84 percent. (More than half of the students with disabilities spend more than half [55.4 percent] with their nondisabled peers, while 11 percent of the students with the most challenging disabilities spend no time with nondisabled peers.)
- The Birth-to-Three System, under the administration of the Department of Mental Retardation, serves 3 percent of all children under the age of three (approximately 9,400 children per year.). Services are primarily delivered in the child's home (99 percent).
- The total expenditure for special education services (2001-02 unaudited data) was \$1,037,745,408.
- Students with disabilities who participated in the standard administration of the CMT scored at or above proficient an average of 38 percent of the time across all content areas, compared to 82 percent of their nondisabled peers.
- Students with disabilities who participated in the standard administration of the CAPT scored at or above proficient an average of 44 percent of the time, compared to 83 percent of their non-disabled peers scoring at or above goal.

The report identifies as the four largest challenges (1) reducing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers; (2) increasing access for students with disabilities to general education classrooms, curriculum and extracurricular activities; (3) identifying ways to reduce the disproportionate identification of students with disabilities based on race/ethnicity and gender; and (4) increasing the number of early intervention programs to assist students at risk of being identified as in need of special education.

DRAFT SCIENCE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Board members reviewed the draft Science Curriculum Framework, which stresses the importance of students being able to make connections between science and their life outside the classroom. The new framework promotes scientific literacy as the primary goal for science education, and endeavors to increase the number of Connecticut graduates who earn college degrees in science fields by generating interest in science careers. International studies show that U.S. science scores are lower than 17 other nations, and there has been no indication of growth in science achievement by U.S. 8th graders from 1995 to 1999. The frameworks contain content standards and core performances by grade level. The draft framework will be sent out to school districts with an evaluative feedback form. The Science Framework Committee, in turn, will review comments and consider improvements to the draft prior to its final publication next fall.

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 15 – PLAN OF REPRESENTATION

The Board did not approve a plan of representation for Regional School District No. 15, thereby keeping in effect an order of weighted vote based on the 2000 Census data, ordered by former Commissioner of Education Theodore S. Sergi. The order of weighted vote of the current members of the Regional Board is as follows: Middlebury—four members weighted at .66 votes per member; and Southbury—six members weighted at 1.23 votes per member. The Board must establish a plan that has the full force of law until such time as the towns can mutually agree on a plan in accordance with state law. In the interim, it has asked the representatives of both towns to try to come to a mutually acceptable agreement.

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM: YALE UNIVERSITY

The Board granted full program approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2008, to the Yale University undergraduate programs in the following teacher preparation programs: early childhood (birth-K), secondary academic subjects (Grades 7-12) and music (PK-12).

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM: SAINT JOSEPH COLLEGE

The Board extended program approval to September 30, 2005 to the following teacher preparation programs at Saint Joseph College: early childhood and elementary (birth-K; N-3; and K-6); middle school subject areas (Grades 4-8); secondary academic subjects (Grades 7-12); and special subjects, fields or instructional areas (home economics, PK-12; and comprehensive special education (K-2). The one-year extension was requested by the college to allow additional time to hire several staff members in the college's educator preparation unit.

ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS I AND II (ARC I AND ARC II)

The Board extended program approval to September 30, 2005, to the ARC I and ARC II graduate programs in the following areas: special subjects, fields or instructional areas (PK-12); middle school subjects (Grades 4-8); and secondary academic subjects (Grades 7-12). The Board required the submission of an Institutional Report in December 2004, and an on-site visit in spring 2005. The ARC program operates under the Connecticut State Board of Governors for Higher Education. Commissioner of Higher Education requested the extension to allow time to fill the position of Director of the ARC.

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM: CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

The Board granted full program approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2008, to the undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs (early childhood and elementary education; secondary academic subject areas; special subjects, fields and instructional areas; and administrative areas); and full program approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2008, to the graduate program preparing superintendents of schools.

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM: SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

The Board granted provisional approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2005, with interim reports due by February 1, 2004, and October 1, 2004, and an on-site visit in spring 2005, to the undergraduate and graduate programs in elementary education, secondary academic subjects and intermediate administration or supervision; granted full program approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2005, to a revised cohort-based program preparing candidates for certification in intermediate administration or supervision; and granted full program approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2005, to the university's new Connecticut Literacy Program preparing candidates for certification as remedial reading/remedial language arts teachers, Grades 1-12. Interim reports are due for both of the latter two programs by October 1, 2004.

REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR THE APPROVAL OF CONNECTICUT EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The Board appointed David B. Erwin to serve on the Review Committee for the Approval of Connecticut Educator Preparation Programs for a one-year period commencing October 1, 2003. Mr. Erwin, Superintendent of the Montville Public Schools, will fill the unexpired term of Susan Sawchuk. This 12-member advisory committee, appointed by the State Board of Education, studies reports submitted by institutions seeking program approval and visiting teams that conduct on-site visits. The committee interviews representatives of the institutions and visiting teams and, based on its findings, recommends appropriate program approval ratings to the Commissioner of Education.

MASTERY STANDARD TO ASSESS LINGUISTIC PROGRESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The Board approved the recommendations concerning the assessment and exit criteria for all English Language Learner (ELL) students. In May 2003, the Board established the English Mastery Standard to assess the linguistic progress of students in mandated bilingual programs. Due to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, all districts with ELL students must annually assess their linguistic progress and achieve annual increases in progress toward attaining English proficiency. Notice of the standards at each grade level was sent to superintendents.

THIRD GENERATION CONNECTICUT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE TEST (CAPT)

The Board voted to postpone the first administration of the third generation CAPT from spring 2006 to spring 2007. The additional year will allow for completion of the new CAPT science test and for districts to modify their science curriculum accordingly. Further, it will allow additional time to review how the new CAPT aligns with other assessments (e.g., 2006 version of SAT) and initiatives (e.g., graduation requirements). Other considerations taken into account by the Board include the possibility of making the CAPT a computer-based test and a choice of a test contractor.

CHARTER SCHOOL SEATS

The Board approved the redistribution of seats to the existing charter schools by allotting an additional seat to New Beginnings Family Academy, Interdistrict School for the Arts and Communication (ISAAC), Jumoke Academy, Trailblazers Academy and Explorations Charter School. The seats became available as a result of Common Ground High School relinquishing five of its authorized seats. The total number of charter school seats, 2,280, remains the same.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST START-UP GRANT

The Board approved the Department's application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the "School Breakfast Start-up Grant." \$293,088 was requested to increase the number of schools participating in the school breakfast program, particularly those serving low-income children.

CHRISTA McAULIFFE EDUCATOR EXPLORER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

The Board approved the Department's application to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) for the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's Christa McAuliffe Educator Explorer Professional Development Program grant. Grant funds (\$50,000) will be used to support a 10-day professional development institute for 50 exemplary elementary educators. Teachers will be able to expand their understanding of standards-based practice in literacy and numeracy, develop skills in evaluating student work and effective teaching practice, and develop leadership skills.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT GRANTS – 2003-2006

The Board approved the Department's application to the U.S. Department of Education for a three-year state grant under the School Improvement Program, "Advanced Placement Incentive Grant." Funds will enable the State Department of Education to provide support to priority school districts to increase the number of AP courses offered in their high schools, student participation in AP examinations and the number of students who score 3 or better on the AP examinations. The grant awards for each year of the grant period will be \$692,867, \$699,530 and \$697,277.

The Board also approved the Department's application "Advanced Placement Test Fee Grant," which will enable the State Department of Education to increase the number of students taking AP courses in their high schools. Funds will provide the test fees for students whose incomes qualify them for the Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch Program. The grant awards for each year of the three-year grant will be \$50,000, \$57,500 and \$66,150.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Board approved several grant applications submitted by the Regional Vocational-Technical School System. These include:

- ***Names Can Really Hurt Us***, a program funded by the Eastern Connecticut Community Foundation that provides teachers and students with the skills to develop strategies to combat prejudice in school, in the community and in the workplace (\$4,000).
- ***Police Explorer Program***, funded by the Office of Policy and Management. This program enhances positive police interactions with students at A.I. Prince Regional Vocational-Technical School outside the traditional enforcement role and provides leadership development opportunities and support for individual students and groups of students (\$11,954).
- ***Save In-School Program***, funded by the South Central Connecticut Regional Workforce Development Board. Funds will be used to provide services to 12 H.C. Wilcox Regional Vocational-Technical School students who exhibit behaviors associated with at-risk youth (\$26,660).
- ***Save Out-of-School Program***, funded by the South Central Connecticut Regional Workforce Development Board. Funds will be used to support 8 at-risk out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 21 in Eli Whitney Regional Vocational-Technical School's adult diploma program (\$27,452) and 3 students in H.C. Wilcox Regional Vocational-Technical School's adult diploma program (\$15,190).
- ***Shop Educational Program***, funded by the Eastern Connecticut Community Foundation. Funds will be used to purchase tools, uniforms and other school trade supplies for 18 income-eligible students in Norwich Regional Vocational-Technical School (\$3,600).
- ***Drug-Free Community Support Program***, funded by the Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council. Funds will be used to support an advisor to Vinal Regional Vocational-Technical School students enrolled in a countywide service project (\$1,600).

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective July 1, 2002)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS
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NOTE: The Board will meet on November 5, 2003. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

The Board Report is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the format and content of ***The Board Report***. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us.